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GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVEL.[1]

AFRICA.—THE EASTERN DESERT OF EGYPT.—"Notes on a Sketch Map of Two Routes in the Eastern Desert of Egypt" is an interesting account of the scenery, etc., of a little-known part of Egypt proper, viz., the stony desert lying between the Nile valley and the Red Sea. The desert rises from the Nile for about a hundred miles, where the elevation is 2,000 feet, and thence shelves more sharply to the Red Sea. The Red Sea slopes are blessed with frequent rain-storms; waterfalls, crystal pools, fern-clad grottoes, even trees, can be found in the wadis or valleys which seam their sides, and even the Nile slope has its picturesque ravines and tree-sprinkled nullahs. The inhabitants of the district are the Ma'aze tribe of Bedawin, who live in goats'-hair tents, to the north; and the more civilized Ababdi to the south. This Eastern Egyptian desert was probably the scene of the first monasteries in the world. Those of St. Anthony and St. Paul, about nine miles apart, and situated about seventeen miles from the coast, in latitude 29°, are still visited by travelers.

Almost the entire traffic between Rome and India passed, two thousand years ago, along the old trade route between Kosseir, on the Red Sea, and Koptos (modern Kuft), on the Nile. Every five or six miles along the route a more or less ruined khan exists. In the Messägh El Bagar are quarries, once worked by the ancient Egyptians, and bearing inscriptions by the Persian conquerors. Roman stations exist, one of them is Saghi or Naka'al Teir. Ibex are abundant, choosing for their home the wildest and most inaccessible mountains.

THE RAIAN MOERIS.—Mr. Cope Whitehouse sees in the Raian basin the Lake Mœris of ancient geographers, and states that surveys carried out under his direction by the authorization of the Egyptian government, prove that the area can again be converted into a storage reservoir for the surplus waters of the Nile. The number of reclaimable acres in Lower Egypt is given at about five millions; and the surface of the Wadi Raian, at 20 metres above the Mediterranean, at 346,000,000 metres, with 25,540,000 metres of contents. Colonel Ardah states that there are no engineering difficulties in the way of utilising this large basin.

PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY OF FERNANDO PO.—Petermann's Mitteilungen contains an account of the physical geography of Fernando Po, by Oscar Baumann, a member of Dr. Lenz's expedition. The island is one of a volcanic group which may be regarded as the result of an eruptive fissure extending southwest from the Cameroons mountains to the island of Anno Bom, or even further, and seeming to find in the Rumbi mountains a continuation in the heart of Africa. The volcanic peak O-Wassa or Clarence Peak, 10,030 feet in height, almost entirely covers the northern half of the island. West and northwest this mountain is cut by deeply eroded gorges ending in a narrow belt of flat country; to the north and northeast the sides slope gently to a precipitous rocky coast; on the east the precipitous slopes end in a grassy plateau about 1,300 feet above the ocean, while on the southwest there is a gradual descent to the plateau of Batec, which connects O-Wassa with the southern mountain system. The crater is 575 feet deep. The southern mountains for the most part present an almost perpendicular front to the sea. They form two chains and are basaltic. A volcanic mass south of these ranges has what appear to be remains of craters. The principal river is the Uaya or Shark. Few of the rivers rise at a height of more than 2,000 feet.

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[1] Edited by W. N. Lockington, Philadelphia, Pa.

ASIA, ETC.—THE TRANSCASPIAN OASES.—The mountainous part of Transcaspia, according to M. A. Konschin, is bounded west, north and east by an interminable sand and salt desert, which is rapidly advancing over the mountains and gaining upon the zone of alluvial soil formed by the erosion of the mountains. A tract of country of this recent "loess," extends from Kizil-Arvat to Sarakhs, and equals in area the Khiva oasis, though from lack of running water it forms a dreary contrast to it.

THE CAUCASUS.—Though Elbruz is still the monarch of the Caucausus, several peaks are now known to exceed 16,000 feet. Among these are Tetnuld (16,700 feet), recently ascended by Mr. Douglas Freshfield; a peak climbed in 1886 by Mr. Dent and Mr. Donkin (16,550 feet by their estimation); Schkara and Djanga, which Mr. Freshfield estimates respectively at 17,200 and 16,900 feet, and the Koshtantau, 17,096, and Dychtau, 16,925 feet, of the Russian maps. Mr. Freshfield states that travel in this region of grand mountain scenery is now quite safe.

ASCENT OF THE OWEN STANLEY RANGE.—Messrs. C. H. Hartmann and G. Hunter have succeeded in reaching the summit of the Owen Stanley, the principal range of mountains in British New Guinea. Twenty-seven friendly natives accompanied them in the ascent. Some difficulty, which was peaceably overcome, was encountered with a tribe which guards the great mountain Paramagoro, believed to be the abode of the spirits of the departed. It rained nearly all the time the party were on the mountains. The flora was magnificent in the extreme. It does not appear that the highest summits were reached.

Discoveries in New Guinea.—Two new rivers, named by their discoverers the Jubilce and the Douglas, have been found and mapped by the exploring party sent out on the *Victory* by Messrs. Burns, Philp & Co. Very few natives were met with, except upon the sea-coast, and these were not particularly hostile. The Douglas was followed to Bowden junction, from whence the eastern tributary (Philp River) was taken until a point was reached about 100 miles up the stream and 25 from the German boundary. The Aird River was found to be but one of the mouths of the Douglas. The Jubilee River opens into Deception Bay, at the head of the Gulf of Papua, about half a degree west of the mouth of the Douglas, and trends northwestward toward the Albert Victor Range. It, also, was followed for about 100 miles. The entire coast region here is very swampy, with dense undergrowth, but the interior is a hilly wooded country. Cretaceous limestone was met with on the Philp River, while basaltic rocks occurred still higher up, and were also met with upon the Jubilee. Both rivers have several mouths, their deltas covering about 40 miles respectively. The natives gave indications of Dravidian origin. Their canoes were dug-outs with outriggers, and often large. They wore nose-pencils, and distended the lobes of the ears.

Geographical News.—Dr. A. Meyer, of Leipzig, who has recently succeeded in ascending Kilimanjaro to the glacier-walled crater-summit of Kibo, and has explored the volcanic plateau which lies between Kibo and Kimawenzi, estimates the altitude of the former at 19,680 feet, instead of 18,800, as believed by Johnston, who reached 16,000 feet.

M. Sibiriakoff has again despatched the steamer Nordenskiold to the Yenisei *via* the Kara Sea. The vessel left Norway in August, and reached the mouth of the Petchora, where she received a cargo of skins, corn, tallow, and mammoth tusks. The Phœnix of Leith succeeded in entering the Yenisei itself.

From accounts received from various parts of the Arctic Seas of the state of the weather and the ice during the past summer it appears that the steady and continuous prevalence of easterly and northeasterly winds forced the ice from the regions north of Spitzbergen and Nova Zembla down into the seas around Northern Norway, Jan Mayen, Iceland, the Faroë Islands, and the east coast of Greenland. This is thought to account for the early setting in of winter experienced in England.

Dr. H. V. Jhering has voyaged up the Cainacuam, a river in the Brazilian province of Rio Grande do Sul, from its delta to the town of S. Jose. Throughout its lower course the river winds in sharp curves, and while the right bank is steep and wooded, the left is flat and covered with gravel. Higher up both banks are wooded, and slope gently. Dr. Jhering's map (Petermann's Mitteilungen) shows that the Cainacuam has five mouths, while that of the government engineer (1882) shows but three. Many valuable woods occur in the forests. The "campos," or open tracts, which are invariably higher than the forest-covered country, are referred by Dr. Jhering to the diluvial period, while the wooded lands are alluvial.

M. von Fetvelde, in a "Notice" upon the Congo Free State, gives its area at 1,075,000 square miles.

MINERALOGY AND PETROGRAPHY.[1]

Petrographical News.—The volcanic bombs from the Lake Laach district are divided by Hubbard[2] into four classes—old crystalline and schistose bombs, sanidinite bombs, trachyte bombs, and basalt bombs. The last three varieties are difficult to separate from each other, but are easily distinguishable from the first class. After discussing very briefly the various theories proposed to account for these bodies, the author proceeds to investigate those in which *nosean* occurs. He examines two hundred and sixty thin sections of nosean-bearing bombs, and reaches the following conclusions: (1.) The Nosean is in greater part a druse mineral. (2.) The inclussion so characteristic of this mineral consist of magnetite, either fresh or slightly altered. (3.) The little red octahedra so frequently accompanying the titanite of the Lake Laach bombs is closely related to the pyrrhite of San Miguel, and has probably been derived by the alteration of titanite. Several other points of interest in relation to the minerals occurring in these bombs are noted. The most important results reached, however, are those which have been mentioned. —The elæolite-syenite from the vicinity of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, has recently been carefully examined by Fr. Graeff.[3] The mass of the rock is described as possessing a holocrystalline hypidiomorphic structure. Its principal constituents are hornblende, orthoclase, elæolite, augite, and mica. The feldspar is noticeable for the possession of a parting[4] parallel to $7\ P\bar{\infty}$. In other cases it is intergrown with very fine lamellæ of plagioclase, thus showing striations when examined under the microscope in polarized light. The elæolite is generally fresh, but in some instances is altered into sodalite and analcite. The accessory minerals are titanite, apatite, zircon, fluorite and a black garnet. The rock is interesting, as affording another example of the predominance of hornblende

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[1] Edited by Dr. W. S. Bayley, Madison, Wisconsin.

[2] Min. u. Petrog. Mitth., viii., 1887, p. 356.

[3] Neues Jahrb. f. Min., etc., 1887, ii. p. 222.

[4] cf. W. Cross, Monog. xii. U. S. Geol. Survey, p. 348. Mr. Cross finds a parting in the sanidine of the Leadville rhyolites, which is parallel to